United Free Church of Scotland Zewish Committee

Life from the Dead

A PLEA FOR THE JEWISH MISSION

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A Famous Jewish Convert

THE fact ought never to be forgotten by the Church that St. Paul was a converted Iew. That fact alone is a most powerful plea for the Jewish Mission. If the Church realised one half of what it owes to the vast ability and amazing spiritual energies of St. Paul, the Mission to the Apostle's race would receive far more encouragement than it does, and would hold a warmer place in the hearts of all Christian men and women. St. Paul gave the Church a conception of what a converted Jew might do for Christ, and through his loyalty to Christ he put the whole world under a debt which cannot be measured

It must not be imagined that St. Paul was ignorant of the powers or the possibilities of the race from which he sprang.

Indeed, these matters were often in his mind; and the problem of the future of the Jewish race weighed very heavily on his heart. What did God mean in choosing this race? What did He mean in the hardening of their hearts? What did He mean in their rejection of Christ? What was the purpose of that? What would be its ultimate issue? No one can read St. Paul's epistles without realising that questions such as these had a place in his heart. What impressed St. Paul was the fact that the immediate occasion of the Christianising of the Gentiles was the Jewish rejection of Christ! He could not get past that fact. It had a central place in all his thoughts about these questions. For himself, he saw in it the wise and gracious purpose of God.

In one passage, in the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle makes a most illuminating and suggestive statement: 'For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?' I am afraid the Church has not given that passage

the attention it ought to receive. St. Paul saw vividly the hand of God in the spiritual history of the Jewish race. He saw that there was a Providence behind the rejection of Christ by Jerusalem. Through that rejection the Gospel had been delivered among the Gentiles. The word of reconciliation had been brought to them, and the truth had dawned on the Church that the religion of the crucified Jesus was one fitted and adapted for the whole world. That was an epoch-making truth; and the way in which it came to the Church, through the casting away of the Jews, was also epochmaking. But the end was not yet. God did not mean that the people whose had been the Fathers and the promises should remain outside His covenant of grace. They too would be gathered in; they too would come to acknowledge Christ. St. Paul's imagination leapt forward to that time. 'The receiving of them would be as life from the dead.' The golden age of the Church of Christ would in truth dawn when this Jewish race which had turned from Christ would turn to Him, and, with all the fire and intensity and persistence of their Jewish individuality, would become the servants and the evangelists of the Church. Then would the Church of Christ have a spiritual life and zeal such as it has never had since the days of Pentecost. 'The receiving of the Jews' would be like a new morn in the Church's life. It would be LIFE FROM THE DEAD.

The Christian's Obligation

No one could put the argument for the Jewish Mission in a more telling way than St. Paul himself has done. Surely if members of the Christian Church realised not merely how the message of reconciliation which has come to them has come through 'the casting away' of the Jews, but above all how 'the receiving of them' will usher in a new age in the Church's history—an age which St. Paul, with inspired foresight, described as *life from the dead*; if we who are fellow-labourers with Christ realised these things as St. Paul

realised them, then how our zeal for the Jewish Mission would be redoubled, and how eagerly the Church of Christ would throw itself into this enterprise, making the old word a real watch-word, 'To the Jew first.'

For, indeed, it cannot be denied that there is in many minds a certain sluggishness or reluctance to support Jewish Missions, as compared with the general missions of the Church. It may be true, and indeed one suspects it is true, to some extent, that this hesitation in front of the Jewish Mission has its root in ignorance of the real claims of the Mission, or in the half-hearted, almost apologetic, way in which these claims are sometimes laid before the Christian people of our congregations. But, apart from that, it may be profitable to ask in detail how this sluggishness has arisen.

Preindices

It must be frankly admitted that the Christian mind, when brought face to face with the claims of the Jewish Mission, starts

to consider the question with certain prejudices. There is that lingering prejudice. latent in the Western mind against the lew. simply as a Tew. It is not by any means difficult to unearth the roots of the prejudice. The exclusiveness of the Jew-along with a certain religious pretentiousness which made him detestable to the Roman mind, has something to do with it. The bitter hostility which the Jew displayed to Christianity in its infant days, has perhaps more to do with it. Further, the Christian mind has to overcome the fact that it was this race which exposed the World's Redeemer to the pungent humiliation of a Cross. The prejudice arising from such roots in the far-away past has worked down through the ages, and it has been intensified by the remarkable vitality of the Jewish race which bore up in all the darkness of mediæval Europe, and indeed prospered. The commercial instinct and success of the Jews in the grim poverty of the ages that have come and gone stirred feelings, not of jealousy only, but of real hatred; and these feelings still survive

among peoples that have not outlived mediævalism. To-day there is left in the modern mind a residuum of these hitter feelings of the past which takes the form of a prejudice, and the Christian mind has to overcome this prejudice when it confronts the problem of the Jewish Mission.

Further, to be quite candid, there is in some minds the impression that Jews, as a race, are extremely wealthy; so the question is asked, if help is to be brought to them in their highest life, why should it not come from members of their own community? Why should not the Christian Church be urged rather to pour forth of its liberality for heathendom?

In reply to this, it is sufficient to say that, though there are great and striking exceptions, the vast body of the Jewish race is sunk in extreme poverty; and those who are willing to help do not belong, as a rule, to the wealthy exceptions. Moreover, how can it be expected that help should come to Judaism from within itself, when the truth is that the heart of the race is turned from Christ?

Long ago the Master Himself put the matter conclusively: 'Can the blind lead the blind?'

Sitting in Darkness

Again, it is alleged by some that, on the principle of sending the gospel to those who need it most, there are, in the dark places of the earth, multitudes of ignorant, debased savages, destitute of the first principles of morality and religion, and living without hope in the world, who have far more claim on our pity and help than the Jew, heir of an ancient civilisation, having the Old Testament Scriptures in his hands, professing to worship the one true God, and in many cases leading a virtuous, useful, and estimable life. Surely, it is said, if the energies of the Church are to be devoted to missions, there is no question where they ought to be expended. The Jew is happy and contented with his own faith. Why not leave him alone?

It is well frankly to recognise this attitude as in some degree accounting for the reluc-

tance to support the Jewish Mission. But this objection overlooks two important facts. The first is that the great mass of the lews do not know the Old Testament: they do not know the Scriptures, which testify of Christ, but are so bound by superstition and the tyranny of the synagogue that it is doubtful whether the bulk of Jewry is not in even deeper spiritual darkness than the heathen. The second fact overlooked is that the highest life which it is in man's power to reach can only be reached in fellowship with Jesus Christ. The possibility of the best and most useful life here, and the promise of the fullest life hereafter, are made sure to us only in Him. Life comes to its best only through the presence of Christ in the heart. If we believe this, how can we dare to leave the Jew alone? Can we be content to leave any man with an incomplete happiness, and the possibility of a truncated, fruitless life? Our Lord meant that the gospel of God's love should be preached to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem. Dare we disobey His parting command? And

can we disregard His own words: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me?'

In view of the universality of her commission, the Church has no right to confine the gospel message to one class or to another. It is dangerous to institute comparisons between souls, for all souls are infinitely precious to God. Yet it need not be overlooked that for the future of the Church of Christ, for the ingathering of the nations, the conversion of the Jews, being what they are, with their intense religious instincts and peculiar individuality, ought never to be placed in the same balance with the conversion of a savage people. The possibility involved in the receiving of the one class is not to be compared with the possibility in the other. And if, as St. Paul believed, the receiving of the Jews would be 'Life from the dead,' how ought the Church to redouble her energies that not one of them should be a stranger to the incarnate love of God!

Difficulty—an Incentive

On the other hand, there is often a feeling of hopelessness about the Jewish Mission, arising partly from its admitted difficulty, partly from its alleged poverty of results. Many in the Church prefer to support missions where the initial difficulties are supposed to be less and the resulting

victories greater.

Every Christian mission at home and abroad, whether among Jews or Gentiles, has its own difficulties; and in every non-Christian community conversion to Christ usually entails persecution. Our Lord forewarned His disciples that it would be so. But that is no reason why we should be deterred from offering them the salvation which He purchased for them with His own blood. Hindus, Chinese, Moslems, and many of the savages whose conversion is considered comparatively easy, have embraced Christianity at the cost of all they held dear on earth, and of life itself. The Jewish convert has to encounter his full share of such trials-ostracism, loss of livelihood contempt and enmity from 'them of his own household.' Moreover, the Jew has another initial difficulty for which he is not to blame. Can we wonder if he thinks badly of Christianity when the records of its past are stained with the blood of his race? If Christianity to-day has to overcome a prejudice against the Jew, is it any wonder that the Jew has to overcome a prejudice against the Christian religion, which he associates with the horrors of his age-long persecution? All the more reason, therefore, that to-day we should try to show him that the true spirit of Christianity is yearning for his heart-not for his blood.

The difficulty of any bit of work can never be a reason for abandoning it. The difficulty of the Jewish Mission must rather become an incentive to Christian enterprise. If we are loyal to Christ, we shall think less of the difficulty and more of the joy of achievement. Here is an incident which has a powerful moral behind it. A missionary from China was on his way home, when one

of his fellow-passengers asked in scorn, 'Do you expect the Chinese to be converted?' His reply was conclusive, 'That is a question which I have never yet heard from a converted man.' All the arguments which can be brought forward for missions tell with equal force for the Jewish Mission. If we are to be true to Christ, we must not be appalled at the difficulty of any mission, for the marching orders of the Church are decisive, 'Preach the gospel to every creature'

Can the Jew be won?

But a question of fact remains. Have the results, after all, been so poor as to justify any feeling of hopelessness?

While a missionary enterprise such as this ought never to be judged by mere tabulated results, yet even on this level the Jewish Mission will bear the closest examination The calculation has been authoritatively made that during last century there were 224,000 converts from Judaism to the Chris-

tian faith. Thousands of converted lews are in all parts of the world indistinguishable, except in point of race, from Christians. Over 600 Jewish converts are ministers of the gospel. In London alone there are said to be 3000 Jewish converts. But the best point of view from which to consider a question of this kind is not the number of converts, but their quality-not the list of baptisms, but the influence the converts exert. In this point of view the record of Jewish Missions is absolutely unique. It may be said that if the spiritual influences, which to-day are to be traced to the consecrated zeal of Jewish converts, are to be any prophecy of what is yet to come, then the sooner this wonderful race acknowledges Christ the better for the Church and for the whole world

If we confine our view to comparatively modern times, the name of Neander at once occurs. Who will measure the influence of a Christian scholar like Neander, whose *Life of Christ* is a classic, and whose *Church History* is a massive contribution to the

world's literature? Other names spring to one's mind—Adolph Saphir, whose spiritual genius left its mark on England, or Alfred Edersheim, whose Life of Christ is one of the most learned and enlightening ever written. There is a remarkable testimony in the Life of Mr. Wingate, who died in December 1899. During the ten years in which he laboured at Budapest, there were between fifty and sixty converts, and these included Saphir, Edersheim, Professor Leitner, and the Rev. Alexander Tomory, who laboured for so many years in Constantinople among the Jews, and who gave one talented son to the Mission of our Church in India. At the same station, in the ten years prior to the outbreak of the great war, over seventy adult Iews were baptized. A record such as this may well dispel any doubt about the success of Missions to the Jews. It would be needless to multiply illustrations.1 One more may be given, as it is outside purely Scottish missionary enterprise. Few ministries have

¹ Many will be found in such a work as Dunlop's Memories of Gospel Triumphs among the Jews.

been more fruitful in London than that of the Rev. Ridley Herschell. He, too, was a converted Jew, baptized in 1830. Some conception may be formed of the fervency and success of his ministry when it is mentioned that five of his own brothers followed his example and became Christians. Mr. Herschell died in 1862. His son became Lord Herschell, late Lord Chancellor of England.

In the light of such facts, surely the words of Dr. Chalmers, spoken long ago, will find an echo in every heart, when he described this Mission as one of 'prime and prominent importance.'

But the argument for the Jewish Mission is by no means exhausted. There are at least four special reasons why the mind of the Church should be profoundly concerned about the conversion of the Jews. One or two of these have already been hinted at, but it is well that they should be stated clearly. The first special reason for supporting the Jewish Mission may be called

Our Debt to the Dast.

Christian men and women may rightly class themselves as monsters of ingratitude if they do not feel thankful for the past of the lewish race. The past of Judaism is in some respects the most remarkable in history. The little nation of the Hebrews, wedged in in a country so diminutive in its size and so unpretentious in its character, has left an impress on the world's history ineffaceable and immeasurable. We do not sufficiently pause to think of what we owe in the Providence of God to the Hebrew race. It was in that race that Monotheism. the conception of the One true, living God, who in the beginning made the heavens and the earth, and created man in His own image, reached its finest development. Jehovah was Israel's God, and He has through Israel become the world's God. The Hebrews enshrined their conception of God, and of God's relation to men, in a casket of gold, in the noblest religious literature the world has known. So profound

has been the influence of that literature that to-day the nations which are in the van of civilisation are thinking the thoughts about God and man which were first revealed to the Hebrews. They gave to the world saints, seers, and poets, religious thinkers and religious teachers. And in ability, in genius, in insight these prophets, seers, and teachers have never been surpassed. And can it ever be forgotten that it was in this race, so marvellously endowed and so wondrously prepared for His coming, that Jesus of Nazareth, the world's Redeemer, elected to be born? That debt of Israel's past rests upon us as a sacred obligation which we ought at least to try to discharge.

Making Atonement.

There is another debt from the past resting upon us, but it is a debt of blood. In regard to it, we have, surely, an atonement to make! Have we not something to atone for in the past treatment of the Jews in our Christian Dispensation? And if it is pos-

sible for us to make some atonement for the sins of the past, ought it not to rest on us as a supreme duty to do so? What a tragedy of sorrow and pain the Christian centuries have brought for the Jews! Driven from country to country, homeless, friendless, helpless, hopeless; persecuted, bleeding, stricken -do not the sons and daughters of this Hebrew race appeal to our compassion? True, they sinned greatly; but it is also true that they have suffered: and to-day the thought in our minds ought to be this, that the Jew too is one for whom Jesus died, and if He loved him and prayed for his forgiveness, shall not we? More, shall we not try to help him, to show him what the spirit of Jesus really is, and to bring him to the knowledge of the loving Messiah, who has come for the redemption of men? It is painful to think that even in this twentieth century the persecution of the Jew has not ceased, and the terrible story of their sufferings during the war makes our blood run cold. The maxim of Frederick the Great may be true, 'To oppress the Jews never brought prosperity to any government'; but there is a duty on the Church of Christ to show to this persecuted and stricken race that we desire their highest good, and that we wish them to know Christ, because in the knowledge of Him there is life and hope.

The Undying Race

The third reason which ought to weigh with the Church in regard to the Jewish Mission lies in the character and history of the Jewish race. The peculiarity of the history of the Jewish race is this, that notwithstanding all that has come and gone the lew remains, a factor in the history of to-day as in the history of vesterday, and likely to be as great a factor in the history of the future as he has been in the history of the past. There is an element of indestructibility about the Jews. Persecution has not destroyed them. Their blood has been spilt like water; yet they remain. They have remained intact down through the centuries, scattered indeed, but intensely

Jewish, with that indestructible something which no other nation in history has possessed. Some one has described the Jewish race from this point of view as 'the greatest miracle of history.'

When one realises this element of indestructibility, and sees how these few millions of Jews have survived through all the chances of time, the fall of dynasties, and the passing away of nations, with the same faith, the same traditions, the same customs as their fathers, the wonder stirs in one's mind, what can be God's purpose behind it all?

Perhaps the element in the Jewish nature which is most remarkable might be described as its tenacity. The Jews cling tenaciously together, and they cling tenaciously to the traditions of their fathers. This tenacity is a remarkable characteristic; and if only used for Christ, how powerful! The Jews cling so tenaciously to their faith that they are not outside the danger of becoming fanatics! But what if this tenacity should be won for Christ? Then, in truth, tenacity

of faith, co-operating with religious zeal, would influence the Church and move the world in a way unparalleled. No people have ever had a keener religious instinct than the Jews. They possess what might be called a genius for religion. And what the Iewish Mission labours for is the turning of this genius for religion in the direction of Christ. What folly that this genius should waste itself in the pursuit of a shadow! What joy if it could be turned to the realisation and consciousness of a living Messiah! The tenacity of his faith and the fervour of his spirit will make the Jew a passionate, almost fanatical, preacher of Jesus Christ. His intense religious energies will be fully in motion, and will be directed in the channel of Christianity. We have already seen illustrations of this, and Jewish converts are already to be found among the pioneer missionaries of the Cross in all parts of the world, as if they followed that most striking instance in the past-that of the Apostle Paul.

In the General Assembly of 1896, the

Rev. Daniel Edward, the most venerable of Jewish missionaries, delivered a memorable address, in which he said: 'The Jews turned to Jesus will make the hearts of the world melt, as the hearts of the Canaanites did at the wonders of the Desert. The converted Jew knows the majesty of the Word as no other can.'

God's Altimate Purpose

So, there is a fourth reason for our earnest support of the Jewish Mission. The conviction has been borne in upon thoughtful students of Scripture and of history that the ingathering of the nations is intimately, vitally bound up with the conversion of the Jews. 'The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord.' The singular honour which God put upon this people does not appear to be exhausted; and the conviction clings to thoughtful students of history that God has something in reserve. Why this extraordinary aloofness of the Jewish race? Why

this indestructibility? Is the unique religious genius of this people to be wasted? God meant the nation to be a kingdom of priests. What if God means it still to be a nation of priests for humanity? What if God means this people to be special instruments for the conversion of the world? Mr. Edward, after a life-long experience, described the Jews as the Church's reserves. The closing words of this remarkable missionary's testimony ought to be kept before the Church: 'When the battle of the Lord against the world seems to be lost, Christ the King with His many crowns shall burst forth at the head of His reserves of Israel. and gathering the broken ranks of His faithful servants, will ride forth to His great final victory with shouts and hallelujahs.' This is surely what St. Paul meant when he spoke of 'the receiving' of the Jews as LIFE FROM THE DEAD.



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